

Sermon

What a year! It is good to be with you this evening, sharing this most special night.

I suspect that some of us may not have expected to be here, and some of us are heartily relieved to be here. What a year, when our plans seem to hang on a thread - a thread of red on a little box in a small piece of plastic.

We could paraphrase Christine Rosetti's wonderful poem that we sing as a Carol, *In the Bleak Midwinter*, that it is not snow that had fallen, but *blows* that have fallen, blow upon blow, blow upon blow, in this bleak midwinter that seems will never let go.

And yet, and yet we are drawn out into the darkness of our streets, along the roads and pavements from our warm houses, to this Church - the flicker of candle light, the readings still fresh from long ago, and the music and the carols.

But we do not come for the cosy squishy feeling, a sort of Christ-tingly - mass. We come for the profound truth that In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God .. that what has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it .. and we receive that power to be children of God, born not of the flesh, but of God.

Sometimes It takes the darkest hour to see the smallest light. Across out over the sea, the dark Hebridean sea on the island there to which I return with my family and friends over and over again, one ritual for me is on the first night, to look out across the sea to where I know there is a very small light guarding the rocks at the edge of a bay called Camas, ten or so miles away as the gulls fly. And I watch, I get my bearings, and there it is, that sudden flash out over the darkness, out over the sea returning to me, returning *me to me*: the light in the darkness that never goes out, flashing away right now, tonight and every night, out over the sea.

Perhaps we feel all at sea - tossed this way and that, blown off course, back on course, or changing course whether we wish to or not. But the basics remain: that Christ came into the world a vulnerable child, became a refugee within days of his birth, live humbly, was adored and reviled, loved and humiliated, adored and beaten, lived and was murdered, given up for our sake, for the sins of the world, to conquer death and sin.

This we remember tonight, this birth we celebrate tonight, this light that despite all the dark in all the world has never, is never and will never be overcome.

So let us be messengers of joy - let ours be the feet on the mountain - to proclaim God's peace and kingdom throughout the land, that nothing, can ever or will ever put out.

Amen

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